

RAILWAY  
**HERITAGE**  
COMMITTEE

# **LEGAL PROTECTION FOR RAILWAY HERITAGE – THE UK EXPERIENCE**

**Not just a theory but making it work**

- Part 1      Some background + An Introduction
- Part 2      RHC – Early Days Mid 1990s
- Part 3      How Things Have Developed
- Part 4      Who are we and what we do
- Part 5      The Permanent Challenges
- Part 6      The Bigger Picture – More Challenges

# Today's Speakers – Who are we?

Peter  
Ovenstone –  
Acting Chairman

Neil Butters -  
Secretary



# LIFE BEFORE THE RAILWAY HERITAGE COMMITTEE

- o No *legal* protection for moveable railway heritage in Britain, but...
- o Statutory “power of claim” for redundant railway material –  
National Railway Museum (from British Rail)  
London Transport Museum (from London Transport)
- o No problems in transferring ownership: transport bodies were nationalised industry; two museums were state-owned bodies.
- o System worked *fairly* well.

## **PART 2: RHC – EARLY DAYS. MID 1990s**

Privatisation of Britain's public sector railways in 1993.

Recognition that railway heritage needs continuous protection and preservation.

Opportunity seized – result: specific Act of Parliament:

### **Railway Heritage Act 1996**

Only UK law provision for formal *legal* protection of 'moveable objects and records' (as distinct from buildings, structures, landscapes, etc)

## **CHALLENGES OF BRAVE NEW WORLD OF PRIVATISED RAIL...**

From “threats” box of a hypothetical SWOT Analysis.

Threat 1 – Many ‘traditional railway staff’ leave industry; traditional pride in heritage and history goes too

Threat 2 – Take-over by ‘accountants in grey suits’; only make disposal of heritage material for full book value payments

Threat 3 – RHC protective role would be resented; an imposition on commercial operations of new companies; yet another piece of ‘bureaucratic regulation’.



# PART 3 HOW THINGS HAVE DEVELOPED

**What has happened has been a different story**

Esprit de corps has survived in railway industry

Generous approach: nearly all designated material transferred without payment

RHC viewed in a positive light by most of railway industry; strong support from Network Rail, train and freight operating companies, and others.



# PARTNERS FROM (RAILWAY) HERITAGE SECTOR

Not just NRM – operating heritage railways,  
museums large and small; working closely with  
RHC

Support too from umbrella bodies – Heritage  
Railway Association, Association of Independent  
Museums





## **PART 4: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO**

Membership of Committee reflects railway industry, NRM, record offices, heritage sector; other people too

Artefacts, Records, and Scottish Sub-committees



# TOOLS TO DO THE JOB – A rigorous assessment system

- ‘Scoring system’
- ‘Decision tree’ – first applied to artefacts;  
now for records too



# A truly low-cost 'Quango'

- All done on proverbial 'shoe string'
- Full time paid staff – one, Neil Butters
- Everyone else no remuneration, moderate expenses only
- Operation echoes volunteer ethos of UK railway preservation generally



# WHAT WE COVER AND WHAT WE DON'T

- Records and moveable artefacts
- Owned by successor bodies to nationalised British Railways
- Military railways – still state-owned (fairly recent addition)



# WHAT WE COVER AND WHAT WE DON'T

- But not...
  - buildings and other structures – protected by listing
  - artefacts and records already owned by heritage bodies





## **PART 5 THE PERMANENT CHALLENGES**

**1.The ‘Really Big Stuff’**

**2. The ‘Cinderella Stuff’**

**3. The ‘Nice Stuff but not Nice Enough’**



## **PART 6. THE BIGGER PICTURE – MORE CHALLENGES!**

But more opportunities too

The 'RINA' Project – Railway Industry National Archive

Extension of Scope

**‘CAROLINE’**

**Network Rail inspection saloon**

**Former Hastings (narrow) Diesel Electric  
Multiple Unit buffet car**

**Former BR Southern Region General  
Manager’s saloon**





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